Meissner, Christian, and John Brigham. 2001. "Thirty Years of Investigating the Own-Race Bias in Memory for Faces." *Psychology, Public Policy, and Law* **7:3-35**

PRIMARY ARGUMENT: The authors argue that there exists an own-race bias in the memor for human faces where people remember faces of their own race better than faces of other races.

IMPORTANT DEFINED CONCEPTS:
• <u>Own-Race Bias (ORB)</u>: A phenomenon where individuals are more likely to correctly identify someone who shares their race than someone who doesn't.
• <u>Mirror Effect Pattern</u>: The observable outcome of ORB where people are more likely to incorrectly say "that's him" (false alarms) and less likely to correctly say "that's him" (hits) when looking at other-race face than when looking at same-race faces
• <u>Perceptual Learning</u>: An increase in the ability to extract information from the environment as a result of practice and experience with stimulation coming from it. If we have a lot of experience with people of our own race, we get better at learning how to tell our-race faces apart.

PRIMARY FINDINGS:
1. Study participants were more likely to correctly identify an own-race face when compared with other-race faces, and more likely to falsely identify an other-race face versus an own-race face. This suggests that an own-race bias (ORB) phenomenon is present in memory for faces.
2. There is an observed "mirror effect" in which other-race faces receive a lower proportion of hits and a higher proportion of false alarms as opposed to own-race faces. This means that people are more capable of recognizing, memorizing, and identifying faces with features and racial characteristics similar to their own.
3. There is no evidence that racial (or racist) attitudes directly influence the magnitude of the ORB phenomena. However, the ORB phenomena is influenced by the amount of interracial contact, with individuals' ORB seeming to decrease as interracial contact increases. Essentially, it is early childhood segregation that causes us to have very little interaction with people whose facial features differ from ours. As a result, we don't learn how to tell other-race people apart.

KEY QUOTE: "In summary, the mirror-effect pattern across hit and false alarm responses, together with the associated discrimination accuracy and response criterion effects, suggest a process of differentiation consistent with several recent models of recognition memory" (23)

QUESTION TO DISCUSS: If own-race bias is understood in regard to memory for faces, why has this failed to significantly discredit or undermine the importance of eyewitness testimony in criminal cases? How can individuals and the criminal justice system as a whole diminish the effects of this phenomena to avoid false convictions?